

FOOD ADULTERATIONS

A MATTER ROUSING ATTENTION OF PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY.

Work of the Division of Chemistry of the Agricultural Department—Need of Pure-Food Law.

Washington Correspondence New York Post.

The attention of the country seems to be awakened to food adulterations as never before. For years the division of chemistry of the United States Department of Agriculture has been quietly conducting investigations from time to time publishing reports intended to enlist public interest so as to bring about suitable legislation and the means for its proper enforcement. The history of this campaign of education has been peculiar. The government started the investigation, but the States have taken the lead in legislation. It has not yet been possible to pass a national pure-food law, in which respect this country is unlike every other civilized nation on earth. The object of national legislation would be to control the interstate commerce in adulterated foods, and to regulate their sale in the District of Columbia and the Territories. This will undoubtedly come in the near future. In all probability such a law would have passed Congress years ago but for the unnecessary alarm of the cotton-seed-oil men, who hastened to Speaker Crisp's protection as soon as the bill had passed the Senate, and it has always been supposed that this was the influence which prevented its coming before the House. About twenty States have passed pure-food laws of varying merit, that in Ohio being the best, with Massachusetts and Kentucky following close behind.

The principle involved in the pure-food legislation is often misunderstood. No prohibition is contemplated. All Dr. Wiley, the chief chemist of the Department of Agriculture, who has long had charge of these investigations, cares to accomplish is to make those who purvey adulterated food products on sale tell the truth about the quality of the goods. He should bear a label stating what they are. Manufactured honey may be just as palatable as the natural product, but the public should have just as much right to buy the one as the other; all the government should see to it that the public is provided with the means of knowing which it is buying. Then it can take its choice. This would not drive adulterated goods out of the market, but merely limit their sale to those persons who care to take advantage of the lower price at which they are offered.

A STRUGGLE AHEAD.

Professor Wiley, moreover, has no desire to make this a revenue measure by attaching a fee to the government license or label. The thing would then go into the Internal Revenue Bureau, whose chief aim would be the procurement of revenue. If no fee were attached, the inspection service would remain in the Agricultural Department, where the scientific side of the question, in its relation to the public good, would be steadily kept to the front.

No one should suppose that the manufacturers of these foods will permit national legislation on the subject without a struggle. The most difficult part of the case to reach is the patent medicines, so difficult, indeed, that the department has not included them in its recent endeavors. The patent-medicine concerns spend so much in advertising each year that those who concern, which they are not, are affected by such a supervision of their work, could mustered against the whole pure-food programme. What the advocates of this programme would like to do is to compel the proprietors to tell the truth. As it is now, they may take drugs which never cure, pass human life except upon the prescription of a conscientious physician, and label their compound the juice of some fruit, popularly known as "Rheumatism Cure." The less discriminating people would take the name of the medicine as descriptive of its contents, and are thereby greatly deceived. Soothing syrups, which contain powerful opiate, no matter under what name they are sold, in the opinion of the pure-food advocates, are a good example of the kind of thing that the government label should be made to prevent. Then the buyers would know what they are getting. Even as it stands, no attempt will be made at present to secure by national legislation the supervision of patent medicines. The department will be content with patent and other foods, and perhaps by the time that is working well the public will be ready to compel truth-telling in regard to medicine.

SURPRISING ADULTERATION.

The ninth part of the series of reports issued by the Department of Agriculture on food adulterations deals with cereals and cereal products. To little attention has yet been given in the newspapers. Such products are naturally so cheap in this country that the temptation to adulterate them is not great. Moreover, their adulterations are not so essential as in many other kinds of food, like flavoring extracts, spices, and the like. The extent, however, to which even this form of food adulteration is carried on will doubtless come to the readers of the Journal as they peruse the 85 flour examined in the food-control station at Vienna, nearly 14 per cent. contained bran, compared with the standard of 10 per cent. These adulterations were in the form of fine particles of bran, which were not detected by the ordinary methods of examination. Twenty-six samples of ginger cakes were colored with red, saffron and annatto, and the yellow color contained distinct traces of lead. Various pastry samples were colored with eosin, and one contained a trace of yellow color contained lead chromate. A sample of pastry containing beaten white of egg contained alum, which was undoubtedly added to permit the use of old eggs. An apple dumpling contained large quantities of zinc oxide.

It is probable that a larger amount of adulteration is practiced in the case of buckwheat than with any other cereal product. The price of buckwheat is relatively higher than that of rye and other cereals from which it is produced, and it is more easily made, and so renders adulteration profitable. This is probably the reason for the prevalence of adulteration in this cereal.

POTATOES IN BREAD.

The use of potatoes in bread making is very extensively practiced in Europe, and is not unknown in this country. The result of mixing potatoes with flour in bread-making is an increase in the nutritive value, and a decrease of the proteid matter in the loaf. In this country the use of potatoes in bread-making is largely practiced in private families, where it is supposed that a better bread can be secured. This notion is probably erroneous. The chief object of adding the potato to the bread is to prevent the loaf drying too rapidly, but this can be just as well done by proper baking, including the use of a crust which is thicker than that of the same amount of material in cereals. It is very difficult to detect the presence of potato in bread, but the potato provided the mixture of the dough is thoroughly accomplished, and the baking is done with a sufficient amount of heat, to disintegrate the starch granules. The use of chalk, terra alba and other substances of like character for the purpose of making bread is not a new thing, but is practiced in the United States. Instances are on record of such adulterations in Europe.

The next bulletins of this bureau will be devoted to infants' and invalids' foods, and another devoted to preserved fruit, and will follow without great delay. It is probable that General Miles' casual phrase "balanced diet" before the pure-food commission has done more to attract the attention of the country to the dangers of food artificially preserved than any other of the bulletins have done in many years. In the matter of cereals and breads, the department makes out a very interesting picture, and really occasion alarm to Americans so long as wheat and corn continue to be the staple of our food.

The most important cereal that is grown in the United States, from an economic point of view, is wheat. It is not used to any great extent by the native citizens of the United States as a source of bread-making. It is one of the most important constituents of bread, and is used to some extent by our European immigrants. Wheat is the principal cereal in the cereal. The products of wheat are used as human foods in many forms. There are nearly one hundred different grades of food materials made from this cereal by the patent-mill process of milling.

A Thoughtful Man.

A man went into the housefurnishing department of one of our stores recently and

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Ocean Vagabond in Track of Transatlantic Liners and Constantly Threatening Their Safety.

New York Evening Sun.

Among the interesting records in the archives of the Hydrographic Office, none is more remarkable than the terse history of the career of Derelict 2247, formerly the bark Siddartha, of Sackville, New Brunswick, which was recently towed into Bantry bay, Ireland, by a British warship. For six months this sullen mass of wreckage had wandered about the ocean, directly in the track of the transatlantic liners, and many a steamship and sailing vessel which has been posted as missing in the last six months may be accounted for a victim of Derelict 2247 when the sea gives up its dead and its secrets are known. Beaten by heavy seas and winds, and carried by ocean currents, this derelict, prior to her capture by a British warship, had pursued a course of erratic wanderings that has never been equaled by any other derelict of which the government has record. Often in the course of her long career this ocean vagabond would be sighted in one locality, only to disappear for a month, and then, when mariners were beginning to rejoice in the hope that she had gone forever, she would reappear miles from the point where she had previously been reported. Sometimes she would be sighted, and finally rammed, but every effort to destroy her failed, and she was finally captured "alive," as mariners say, and towed into port.

The bark Siddartha, Captain Gerard, left Jacksonville for Liverpool with a cargo of lumber on Jan. 26. The vessel encountered a series of terrific hurricanes, which finally culminated in the great storm of Feb. 12 and 13 last. The worn-out crew had run short of water, and they were in no condition to fight their ship against the buffeting winds and waves. The bark was also leaking, and Captain Gerard finally decided to abandon his vessel at the first opportunity. It came soon in the shape of the Danish bark Veranda, which spoke the distressed vessel a short distance from the Azores. The crew was rescued and the waterlogged craft was left alone in the wintry sea. The day after the abandonment of the Siddartha the steamship Cuban sighted the deserted vessel and sent in the first of what was to be a long series of reports about the wreck.

A DISAPPEARANCE.

Then for two or three weeks nothing was seen or heard of the derelict, and guesses as to where she would next be sighted were many. The German steamship Ludwig was the next to report the vessel, sighting her in latitude 45 degrees, longitude 25 degrees, or 600 miles to the northward of the point where the Cuban had reported her. She disappeared again and three weeks passed. Mariners began to hope that she had gone forever, but it was not to be. The steamship Spaurndrup arrived at the Azores, and reported sighting the Siddartha about 120 miles southwest of the place where she had been reported. On the following day the Hydrographic office chartmakers to believe that some steamship must have collected the wreckage, and the only way to get it was to search for it. The derelict was sighted on the morning of the 10th of March, and reported the derelict late in the day and reported that some one had evidently tried to destroy her. The derelict was sighted on the morning of the 10th of March, and reported the derelict late in the day and reported that some one had evidently tried to destroy her.

COUNTRY POSTMEN OF EUROPE.

Information Which the State Department Has Secured.

New York Sun.

Last year the committee on postoffices of the United States House of Representatives called upon the postmaster general for some details of letter delivery in the various countries of Europe. The committee was told that the postmen of Europe were not only carriers of mail, but also of news, and that they were often the only link between the people of one country and the people of another. The committee was told that the postmen of Europe were not only carriers of mail, but also of news, and that they were often the only link between the people of one country and the people of another.

Finally came the message from Hull that the steamship Colorado had passed the Siddartha on May 14 and that the vessel was on fire. Captain Henry, of the steamship Oakmore, was the thoughtful skipper who thus attempted to rid the ocean of this menace to mariners.

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